

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8632

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4452

LIMDIS

FROM MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK, US

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE OPENING OF LIAISON OFFICE IN RHODESIA

REF: (A) LONDON 13942; (B) STATE 199731

1. AS SUGGESTED, I DISCUSSED THE SUBSTANCE OF REF (B) WITH DAVID OWEN AND JOHN GRAHAM. OWEN HAS THE TWO OFFICERS OF THE PLANE WITH US WHOM HE PLANS "TO LEAVE BEHIND". HE ALSO HAS 20,000 COPIES OF THE WHITE PAPER ON RHODESIA ON BOARD WHICH HE WILL LEAVE WITH THEM. THE BRITISH MAINTAIN THE HOUSE OF THEIR FORMER HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SALISBURY KNOWN AS "MIRANDA HOUSE". I ASKED THEM WHETHER THEIR PARTY WOULD BE REFERRED TO AS A "LIAISON OFFICE". OWEN SAID THAT IT DID NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE SO DESIGNATED.

2. OWEN STATED PURPOSE IS TO INSURE DISSEMINATION OF ACCURATE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE RHODESIAN PROPOSAL. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE RHODESIANS HAVE BEEN PRESSING HIM FOR SOME TIME TO OPEN AN OFFICE IN SALISBURY. HE ASKED ME IF OUR
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OBJECTIONS WERE STRONGLY HELD. I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER FOR HIM TO WAIT TO SEE IF THE RHODESIANS ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL BEFORE MAKING A DECISION. HE COUNTERED THAT THE PURPOSE OF A BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE WOULD BE TO FACILITATE OUR INFORMATION GATHERING AND TO GIVE HIM A USEFUL CONTACT WITH THE RHODESIAN LEADERS DURING THE CRITICAL PERIOD AHEAD.

3. OWEN IS QUITE DETERMINED TO GO AHEAD WITH HIS PLAN. HIS STAFF AFFIRMS THAT HE IS VERY KEEN ON THIS, HOWEVER I DO NOT THINK HE WOULD KEEP THE PARTY IN SALISBURY ON IF OUR INITIATIVE COLLAPSED, THOUGH I AM NOT CERTAIN OF THIS.

4. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT IF EVENTS TAKE A TURN TOWARDS AN INTERNAL OPTION, IT WOULD BE EMBARRASSING TO HAVE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT IN SALISBURY. THEY WOULD INCREASE SUSPICION THAT THE BRITISH, AND BECAUSE OF OUR ASSOCIATION WE OURSELVES, DID NOT DISAPPROVE OF AND MIGHT EVEN BE SECRETLY ENCOURAGING THE INTERNAL SOLUTION. IT MIGHT NOT BE EASY TO FIND A WAY TO WITHDRAW THE GROUP. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF PROVIDING AN OCCASION FOR A PUBLIC GESTURE DISASSOCIATING OURSELVES FROM SMITH'S MOVE. ON BALANCE I DOUBT THAT THERE IS ANY WAY OF DISUADING OWEN ON THIS AND I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE IT IS A MATTER ON WHICH WE WILL HAVE TO ALLOW THE BRITISH TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISION.

5. IF THE DEPARTMENT FEELS VERY STRONGLY AND WISHES TO WEIGH IN FURTHER ON THE MATTER, IT WILL HAVE TO INFORM US QUICKLY AND PROVIDE SOME STRONG ARGUMENTATION.

BOWDLER

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